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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the personality traits (masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated sex role characteristics) of female students, staff, and faculty at a medium-sized university to determine how personality traits were associated with participation in recreational activities. A questionnaire consisting of items related to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), barriers to participation in recreation activites, and selected demographic questions engendered 294 responses. The BSRI consisted of 40 stereotypic masculine and feminine traits. To calculate an androgyny score, a split half median was calculated for the masculine and feminine scores. Questions related to recreation participation consisted of eight categories of activities; e.g., watching television, social activities, sports and outdoor activities. Four questions were asked concerning leisure satisfaction. Very little association could be discerned between personality type as measured by the BSRI and participation in recreation activities. A discussion of the findings is presented. (JD)

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# ANDROGYNY AND RECREATION PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN

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Paper presented at the National Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Las Vegas, Nevada, April, 1987

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A paper presented to the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, April 15, 1987, Las Vegas, Nevada by Karla A. Henderson, Deborah Stalnaker, and Glenda Taylor (Texas Woman's University, Department of Recreation, PO 23717 TWU, Denton, TX 76204).

# Androgyny and Recreation Participation for Women

The concept of androgyny suggests that it is possible for an individual to be both assertive and compassionate, instrumental and expressive, masculine and feminine, depending upon the situational appropriateness of these various modalities (Bem, 1977). The adaptive implications of combined masculine and feminine development in androgyny has been a major concern of sex role research in the last decade (Heilbrun, 1986). The most advantageous feature accorded to androgyny has been the enhanced flexibility available to the individual in meeting situational demands for either masculine or feminine behavior.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the personality traits (masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated sex role characteristics) of female students, staff, and faculty at a medium sized university to determine how personality traits were associated with participation in recreational activities.

## Related Literature

The influence that sex role conditioning and the sex-typing process has had on self-esteem and mental health, particularly in women, has become a major area of psychological research. In many fields of inquiry, the acquisition of appropriate sex-typed behaviors and acquisitions has been studied in relation to various behaviors. The concern for the restrictive effect that traditional sex roles have upon people, particularly women, has become evident. Thus, the concept of androgyny was developed along with appropriate ways to measure stereotypic sex typing.

Measurement of personality traits such as stereotypic masculine and feminine aspects has been possible through the use of several instruments. One of the most commonly and widely used is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). The BSRI is founded on a conception of the sex-typed individual as someone who is highly attuned to cultural definitions of sex-appropriate behavior and who uses such definitions as the ideal standard against which her or his own behavior is to be judged. Bem (1974) based the BSRI on the theoretical assumptions that a) largely as a reult of historical accident, the culture has clustered a heterogeneous collection of attributes into two mutually exclusive categories, each category considered both more characteristic of and more desirable for one or the other of the two sexes, and b) individuals differ from one another in the extent to which they utilize the cultural definitions as idealized standards of femininity and masculinity against which their own personality and behavior are evaluated.

SP 028 901

The sex-typed individual is highly attuned to these definitions and is motivated to keep her or his behavior consistent with them. This goal is accomplished by selecting behaviors and attributes that enhance the image and by avoiding behaviors and attributes that violate the image. In contrast, the androgynous individual is less attuned to these cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity and is less likely to regulate her or his behavior in accordance with them (Bem, 1974).

The BSRI was designed to assess the extent to which the culture's definitions of desirable female and male attributes are reflected in an individual's self-description. A scale reflecting twenty stereotypic characteristics each of feminine, masculine, and social desirability (neutral) was developed by Bem. The BSRI has gone through a series of changes related to the scoring methods. The instrument has been used in many studies to describe androgyny and its relationship to social and psychological aspects of human beings.

In several studies, stereotypic masculinity has been found to be the better predictor of self-esteem among both men and women (Long, 1986; Cunningham and Antill, 1984.) In Whitley's (1984) meta-analysis of studies related to congruence (sex typing by gender), androgyny, and masculinity, the overall results provided support for the masculine model as leading to the best adjustment in people. However, other studies have shown the wide acceptance of androgyny as it is associated with positive mental health (Stark-Ademic, Graham, & Pyke, 1980; Prager & Bailey, 1985.)

In the field of leisure studies, Gentry and Doering (1979) found that biological sex rather than measures of masculinity-femininity, was more likely to determine leisure behavior. This study used the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) Fe-scale to measure masculinity and femininity. College students were the subjects. The authors concluded that most of the relationships between the masculinity-femininity measures and the leisure activities and media were consistent with the sex of the individual. However, Gentry and Doering found that androgynous persons engaged in a greater number of leisure activities than those having other sex roles.

In a later study on leisure motives, Hirschman (1984) found that sex role was consistently able to explain more variance in leisure activity motives than was biological gender. Her study also used the PAQ along with a questionnaire on leisure motives developed by Swanson from Czikszentsmihaly's concept of "flow experiences". The sample consisted of adults including graduate students. The results showed that competitiveness and adventurousness were related to gender. However, fun/pleasure, escape reality, and deep involvement were associated with androgyny. Hirschman suggested a tendency for androgynous persons to pursue multiple, diverse motives in their leisure behavior. She suggested that androgynous persons may be more active than others, leading them to seek stimulation across a wider range of activities and to possess a more diverse set of motives.

## Methodology

A questionnaire consisting of items related to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), barriers to recreation participation, participation in recreation activities, and selected demographic questions was mailed to a randomly selected groups of female students (graduate and undergraduate), staff, and faculty at a medium sized university in the southern part of the United States during the spring of 1986. A 60% response rate was obtained with 294 cases used in the analyses.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory consisted of 40 stereotypic masculine and feminine traits. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7 point Likert scale how much each of these traits were like them ranging from 1= never or almost never true to 7= always or almost always true. Half of these traits were stereotypically feminine while half were stereotypically masculine. To calculate an androgyny score, a split half median was calculated for the feminine and the masculine scores. All respondents were divided into four groups by using the following breakdowns: high feminine plus high masculine= androgynous, high masculine plus low feminine= masculine, low masculine plus high feminine= feminine, and low masculine plus low feminine=undifferentiated. The sample consisted of the following percentages of breakdowns: androgynous=28%, masculine=23%, feminine=24%, and undifferentiated=24%.

Questions related to recreation participation consisted of eight categories of activities adapted from McKechnie's (1974) activity list. These activity categories included: mass media such as watching TV, reading magazines, etc.; social activities such as visiting friends; outdoor activities; sports activities including spectating as well as participation in sports and fitness; cultural activities including attendance as well as participating; hobbies; church and religious activities; and educational activities such as continuing education. Respondents indicated on a 0-6 scale how often they did each of these activities. Zero meant do not participate, 1= seldom (once or twice a year), 2=sometimes (once a month or in season), 3=often (about twice a month), 4= frequently (once a week), 5= very frequently (about 2-3 times a week), and 6=daily.

Four questions were asked concerning leisure satisfaction. These included how satisfied are you with your leisure, how much free time do you feel you have, do you feel you have adequate involvement with recreation, and would you like to have a better leisure and recreation lifestyle.

Demographic questions related to status as student, staff, or faculty, age, marital status, children living at home, income, education, and racial background.

Statistical analyses used included frequencies and analysis of variance. Significance was accepted at the .05 level.

## Results

Some general demographic information may help to understand the sample a bit better. Overall, the sample consisted of 19% staff, 33% graduate students, 23% undergraduates, and 23% faculty. The average age of the sample was 37 years. Fifty one percent were married . Approximately one third of the households had children living at home. The median income for all groups was betweeen $20-000-25,000. Ten percent of the sample were from a minority group.

Overall recreation participation indicated that mass media, social, educational, and church activities were participated in most frequently the by the respondents. Table 1 shows the average participation in each of these activities by the combined group of students, staff, and faculty.

The major question of this study sought to discover the relationship between personality (particularly androgyny as measured by the BSRI) and the activity participation of women. As indicated before, the respondents were fairly evenly divided among the categories of masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Some statistically significant differences were found when the personality traits (as measured by the BSRI) were compared to the student verses employment status of the respondents. Students (both graduate and undergraduate) tended to be more androgynous than did faculty or staff. Faculty were overall more likely to be stereotyped as masculine. Education was the only demographic area where differences existed in androgyny. More educated persons were more likely to be classified as either masculine or androgynous. Age, marital status, or presence of children could not be associated with androgyny.

No statistically significant differences were found between satisfaction with leisure and personality type. Whether a woman was androgynous, masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated by classification had no relationship to her perceived satisfaction with leisure. Overall, only 34% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their leisure. Forty percent said they were dissatisfied while the remainder did not have an opinion. Three-fourths of the women in the study felt they had too little leisure. Only 2% indicated that they had too much leisure. Fifteen percent said they had adequate recreation activity involvement whereas 55% saw recreation as inadequate. Over three-fourths (80%) said they would like to have a better leisure lifestyle.

When the participation in recreational activities was compared to personality traits using analysis of variance, only one item showed statistical significance at the .05 level. Mass media was an area where those who were classified as undifferentiated or feminine were participating more than were those classified as androgynous. See Table 2. The other areas of social activities, outdoor activities, sports, cultural, hobbies, church, and educational activities showed no statistically significant differences among personality types. When the total participation in activities was examined, no association was found between personality and participation. Of the eight

activities indicated in the table, no one personality type appeared to be participating more in the categories of activities indicated. If any group had a tendency to participate less in recreational activities, it was those who were classified as stereotypically feminine.

## Conclusions and Discussion

Very little association could be discerned between personality type as measured by the BSRI and participation in recreation activities in this study. Thus, one might conclude that participation and general satisfaction with leisure are not related to stereotypic personality traits or to the concept of androgyny. The results of this study were similar to what Gentry and Doering (1979) concluded regarding the inability of sex role orientation to predict leisure participation. Contrary to their findings, however, as well as Hirschman's (1984) suggestion, was that androgynous women did not participate in more recreational activities than did others. Androgynous women did not choose any particular activity over another more than the other groups in this study. Androgynous women were no more active in their participation in recreational activities than those women who were classified as masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated. They did not participate in a wider range of activities.

Limitations in the study may explain why the results occurred as they did. The instrument (BSRI) measured only certain aspects of the personality and was unidimensional in its outcome related to stereotypic behaviors. Since it is a paper-and-pencil test, it was subject to social desirability biases and misinterpretation.

Another explanation of the statistically insignificant results may be that women are more alike than different in their involvement in activities. A university community is more likely to have highly educated women who may be more homogeneous than heterogeneous.

The emerging concept of gender schema may be a line of research which could provide additional information about recreational activities for women. The notion of the blending of masculine and feminine behaviors along with one's concept of self may provide additional information which the concept of androgyny and the BSRI cannot do alone. The most recent literature about sex roles and androgyny suggests that perhaps gender schema theory may provide a better explanation of behavior and positive mental health than the concept of androgyny. Gender schema theory proposes that sex typing results from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated to the gender schema. Sex-typed individuals are seen as differing from other individuals not primarily in terms of how much masculinity or femininity they possess, but in terms of whether or not their self-concepts and behaviors are organized on the basis of gender (Bem, 1981).

Hellbrun (1986) found that androgynous women were unique. He also found that most college females retain a sensitivity to stereotypic differences between the sexes despite the unisex

influences of the women's movement. The relative disregard for sex role stereotypes found in the androgynous type of female proved to be dependent upon the moderating effects of androgynous behavior. This may suggest that perceptions of self may have more to do with behavior than gender or sex roles. This line of research may be more fruitful in the future in addressing the aspect of women and/or sex role theory and leisure participation and involvement.

Leisure and participation in recreational activities is a complex phenomenon as is sex role personality typing. To understand human behavior requires a look at androgyny as it relates to personal, political, ideological, and moral aspects of behavior. Other aspects besides personality traits must be included when attempting to predict recreation participation and satisfaction related to women. As Hirschman (1984) also suggested, multiple, diverse motives are operant in leisure and recreation participation. Additional aspects of the questions related to personality and leisure might be further viewed using qualitative methods of research to ascertain more about the meaning and choices which women make in their leisure.

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TABLE I

Average Participation of Women in
Recreational Activities

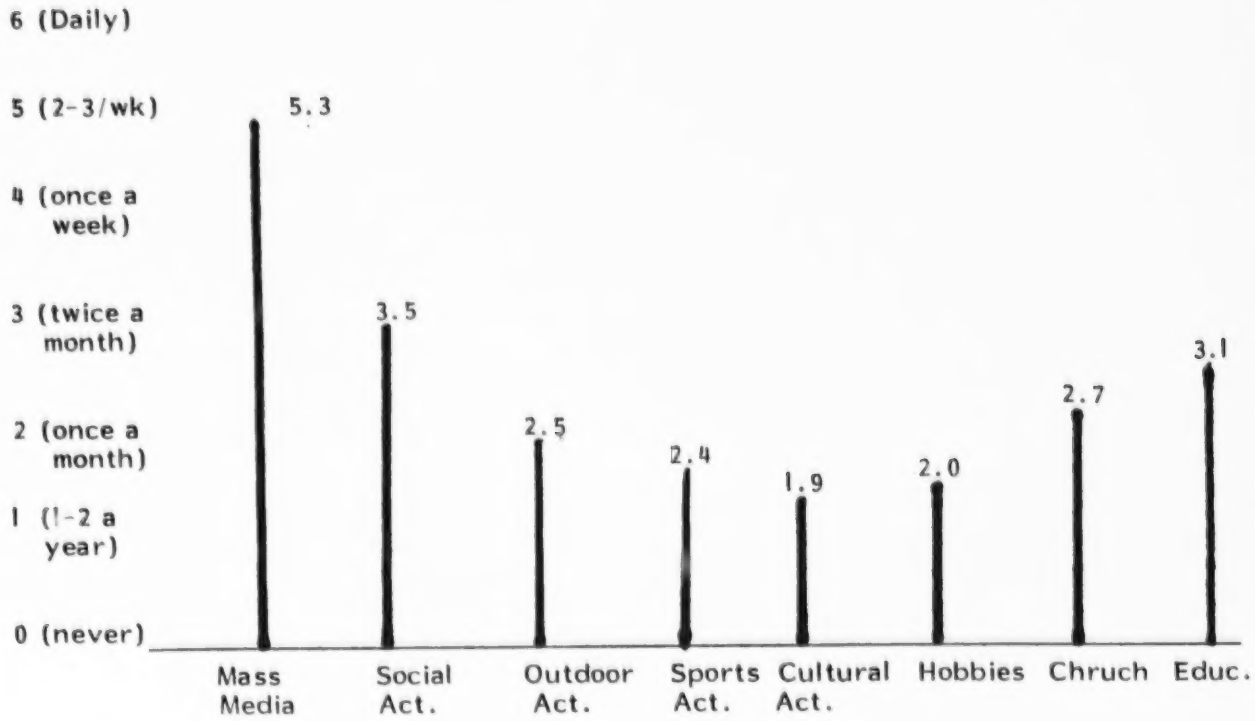

TABLE 2

Personality Traits Related to Recreation Participation @

| | Andro | Mas | Fem | Undif |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mass Media* | 4.9 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 5.5 |
| Social | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 3.7 |
| Outdoor | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Sports | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| Cultural | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Hobbies | 2.2 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Church | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 2.8 |
| Educational | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.1 |

*Sig at .05

@ 0 = Never
1 = 1-2 times/year
2 = once a month
3 = twice a month
4 = once a week
5 = 2-3 times/week
6 = daily